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Nowhere: A kinetic typography motion graphic about the pursuit of happiness

I-Cheng Lee

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nowhere

A kinetic typography motion graphic about the pursuit of happiness

I-Cheng Lee

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:
Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design
School of Design
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology
December 2014

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Abstract

nowhere is a motion graphic project that expresses my personal journey of pursuing happiness. To be happy or not happy, people have the choices of their own lives and thoughts. This project shows that positive thinking could lead to better lives through my example.

A short poetic script on how I realized happiness in my life will be expressed in this project through visuals and composition. Every stylized sentence has a particular connection with the inspiring visuals and transitions. The intent of the piece is to install the viewer with the power of positive thinking by reading the poem with graphics and seeing how the story develops, colors, typography, and transitions throughout the whole piece.

nowhere uses a different method of making kinetic typography to discuss more possibilities of integrating motion graphics and typography. It also experiments different techniques consisting of 3D and 2D elements together in the computer graphics field.

Introduction

People often disregard the idea of being happy because they might have received biased thoughts from their parents, friends, and social media. There are a lot of references such as books, documentaries, and videos, discussing about it. However, many motion graphics that convey the pursuit of happiness mislead people to buy products for happiness.

nowhere is meant to take a different approach about this problem. This project is a reflection about my own life experience of becoming happy. It reveals a universal truth about that the basis of happiness depends on ones perspective about life. Rather than being happy by materialism or getting rich, Simplicity and perception of life describes it all.¹ I would like to use the project to connect with my audience's personal experience, and to make them have positive feedback about how to live happily every day.

The design of the project has combined with different visual elements and computer graphics techniques. This project was accomplished by using 2D and 3D software like Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects, Autodesk Maya, and Maxon Cinema 4D. In order to create hand-drawn feeling, 3D elements were created as a reference for recreating cel-animation, and frame by frame animation, in 2D software.

Instead of using more popular kinetic typography techniques, I chose to use hand-written letters to make every word speak its story. The sentences are part of visual elements and merging with a variety of patterns and transitions to describe the whole story. The experience will be like reading a poem through a motion graphic, but with more emotional engagement.

1. Will Bowen, *Happy This Year! The Secret to Getting Happy Once and for All* (Grand Haven: Brilliance Publishing)

Review of Literature

Before doing the literature review, my proposal was to demonstrate the process of becoming happy by the use of kinetic typography. I wrote some texts alongside the visuals as I was doing my storyboard. In order to ensure my project would successfully convey the main idea to the audience, I decided to focus on the balance between the texts and the visuals. The texts were part of the scene and they could tell their own story.

In addition, there were some technical issues which came up as I was making the project. I would address the additional research I did for the project based on the proposed idea below.

This literature review has two sections which include the research of the topic, visual, and technical researches.

The Topic: Happiness

1. Happy This Year! – The Secret to Getting Happy Once and for All

Will Bowen, Happy This Year! The Secret to Getting Happy Once and for All (Grand Haven: Brilliance Publishing)

Mr. Bowen states different stages to help his reader learn how to be happy by using his own or friends' examples. He also concludes the research he had done to make the stages discussed reliable. This book has helped me understand myself about the reason why I become happy and redefine the definition of happiness. As a result, it inspired me to develop *nowhere* to share my experience via motion graphic.

Review of Literature

2. This is Water

Matthew Freidell, "This is Water," YouTube video, 9:23, posted by "GustabboLeon," August 21, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaVrn1Sz0H8/>.

This short film took an excerpt from one of David Foster Wallace's speeches from the 2005 Graduating class of Kenyon College. It talks about people's choices in their daily lives. There are thousands of frustrations that happen daily, although but it's difficult to notice and no one will discuss about them. In order to experience real freedom, it depends on how someone views the situations; either positive or negative. This speech spearheaded *nowhere*, my thesis project. Through *nowhere*, the viewer will see the same situation differently after the person's perspective of the world changes.

3. Happy Documentary

Happy, wildscreen, directed by Roko Belic(2011; Wadi Rum Films, Inc., 2012), DVD

This documentary interviews different people from Louisiana to Kolkata to find out the reason of being happy. It talks about the extrinsic and intrinsic goals of happiness for the viewer to evaluate what makes people have long-term happiness. After watching this documentary, I discovered more reasons as to why I was unhappy while I was young and believed that my theories about happiness were right. It motivated me to accept my past and to share it to my viewers.

Review of Literature

Visual and Technical Researches

4. Hand Lettering by seanwes

Sean McCabe. Hand Lettering by Seanwes. March 1, 2014. Accessed June 18, 2014. <http://seanwes.com/learn/>.

This website is an online class that teaches people on how to write lettering. The classes include the basic introduction of typography, explaining the structure of serif, san-serif, and script and how to draw them, and how to design and lay out a quote and create visual interests, etc. The online learning class has made the poem in this project lively. I wrote different lettering from the poem and made them speak for themselves, and create the right mood in the project.

5. Rob Legato: The art of creating awe

Robert Legato, "Rob Legato: The art of creating awe," TedTalks video, 16:27, August 2012. http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_legato_the_art_of_creating_awe.html

In this video, Mr. Legato uses three different famous examples to express about how the art that he was making connects to the viewer's visual experience. This talk has helped me integrate my own experience and the viewer's thoughts on different transitions and balance the timing between the text and visual transitions.

6. Photoshop Animation Techniques

Alex Grigg, "Photoshop Animation Techniques," Alex Grigg.com, 1:13:31, December 4, 2013. <http://www.alexgrigg.com/Photoshop-Animation-Techniques>

This tutorial teaches how to draw cel animation in Photoshop and provides very useful techniques to help new learner have faster workflow on creating

Review of Literature

animation in Photoshop. This video has helped me know how to use Photoshop as a tool to create hand-drawn animation and speed up my process of making it.

7. Stick Textures to Dynamic Objects for a Fun Final Reveal

Nick, "Stick Textures To Dynamic Objects For a Fun Final Reveal." Greyscalegorilla. March 25, 2013. Accessed October 18, 2014. <http://greyscalegorilla.com/blog/tutorials/stick-textures-to-dynamic-objects-for-a-fun-final-reveal>

This article teaches about a very interesting technique of how to reveal a logo in Maxon Cinema 4D. I watched the tutorial and learned the concept of how to make it and re-create one in Maya that has more stylized to my scene.

8. The Animator's Survival Kit: A Manual of Methods, Principles, and Formulas for Classical, Computer, Games, Stop Motion, and Internet Animators

Richard Williams, The Animator's Survival Kit: A Manual of Methods, Principles, and Formulas for Classical, Computer, Games, Stop Motion, and Internet Animators (London: Faber and Faber.)

This book talks about a lot of traditional animation's techniques such as movements of walking, hands, and acting. It's very helpful for a lot of hand-drawn movements in *nowhere* such as bird flying and human walking, not only for drawing cel animation in 2D programs, but also for animating in 3D programs.

Process

Thesis Parameters

Format: A Kinetic Typography Motion Graphic

Length: 2:54

Target Audience: People who have unhappy moment in their life

Software: Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects, Premiere,
Autodesk Maya, and Maxon Cinema 4D

Format

Video	Audio
Frame Size: 1280 x 720 pixel Aspect Ratio: 16:9 Frame Rate: 24 fps	Channels: Stereo Sample Rate: 48 kHz

Concept

The thesis project seeks to introduce a universal truth about how people can achieve happiness by thinking positively and loving who they are. The world could be different depending on people's perspective. For instance, the title of the project *nowhere* can be read as nowhere or "NOWhere." Throughout the whole story, same situations and symbols appear repetitively. When different colors and explanations are applied, the results and emotions become different. Many people have unhappy moments in their lives. By using my personal story of being happy, this project creates emotional connections to my audience and their personal stories and makes them rethink the definition of happiness.

Process

Story and Script

In my initial stage of the thesis project, I first addressed everything I have undergone in my past, including cultural issues, bullying, and biased idea about becoming happy, to things that I have recently learned to be happy in the short period of time. After discussing with my committee members, they suggested that I scale down the size and focus on “why and how” I overcame my past to become the person I am today. Therefore, although it’s the same story, my script is different from the one in the proposal.

In terms of creating a kinetic typography motion graphic, a poetic script was created to tell my story. I don’t want my audience to associate my piece to reading an article because there is no narration in the project. Every sentence in the poem has significant meaning to the story. It should be short enough to read and able to speak for itself.

Storyline

The story of *nowhere* is about a girl who was bullied and depressed in the past. She didn’t know where she could go and whom she could trust. She remained withdrawn and kept everything to herself. After she saw herself in the mirror under the ocean, she started to discover herself deeply in her heart. When she admitted the idea of changing, one of her friends tried to guide her to think positively and to use different perspective to see the world. She discovered that she would not be lonely and unhappy anymore if she thought positively. Therefore, she decided to remain happy and to relish her happy journey the rest her life.

Process

Script

I was adrift.
Nowhere was where I belonged.
I was always made fun of and laughed at.
Was there anyone I could trust?

Stop...
Please stop...
STOP!

I closed my eyes and saw something different in the mirror.
A bird came to me.
She made me sing with her and view the world from different angles.
I started to realize.
I am not alone.

Storyboard and Animatic

In order to achieve the benefits of positive thinking, there are a lot of figures and ground transitions in *nowhere*. I drew out different possibilities that have symbolic meanings on every object in the scene and how it transformed to the next scene to discuss if the idea aims to the right direction and the feasibility of creating these elements within my time schedule. The storyboard helped me to clarify my thoughts and build a general structure of my whole project.

After finishing my storyboard, a rough animatic was created to test the timing of the project before the production so that I got a general idea about the overall pacing. Then the process would go back and forth and some shots would be changed to make the flow of the animation smoother. This has been a great guide for me when moving to production process.

Process

Symbols

There are different symbols that are hidden or shown in the project and which have significant meanings. They all represent the idea about how things will be different if people view them from another perspective.

- The title
A word can be seen differently. (Fig. 1 and 2)



Figure 1: nowhere



Figure 2: NOWhere

- The piano
A piano is with us all the time if examined carefully. (Fig. 3)



Figure 3: The trees form a piano keyboard

- The treble clef
A treble was drawn as a transition when “I was a drifter ” turns to “Nowhere was where I belonged.”
- “Nowhere was where I belonged”
The way it divides will create a new meaning. (Fig. 4)

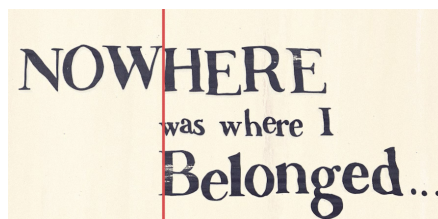


Figure 4: NOW HERE was where I belonged

Process

- Table tennis ball

Seeing it from different angle, the ball is not alone anymore. (Fig. 5 and 6)

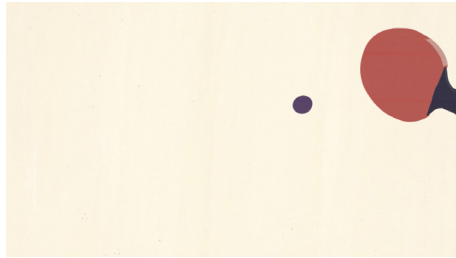


Figure 5: The ball was lonely and played around by the paddles

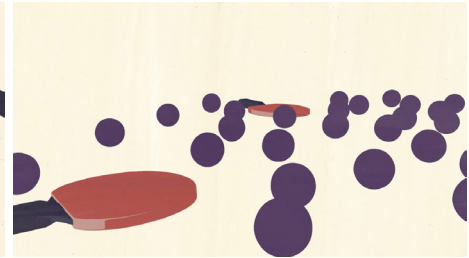


Figure 6: There are a lot of other balls around the ball

- The swings

It could be seen as a closed door or a music note. (Fig. 7 and 8)



Figure 7: The swing has become a closed door in the girl's heart



Figure 8: The girl is riding on a music note swing

- Girl's profile or a flower (Fig. 9 and 10)



Figure 9: To see the outline, it's a girl's profile

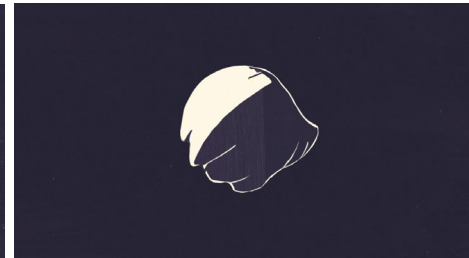


Figure 10: To see the white part itself, it's a flower bud

Process

Typography and Hand Lettering

Choosing appropriate typefaces to express the feeling of my story is a crucial process for the project. Not only my visuals tell my journey of being happy, my texts would also have type evolution to fit the feeling of the animation.

Originally, some typefaces were chosen to display on the scenes in the animatic stage. However, normal typefaces were not able to express the emotions in the story. In my opinion, adding human voice and creating organic feeling on my sentences would be more engaging to the audience. Therefore, I decided to write my own letters and chose serif style typeface to be my main priority to express from sadness to calm; script as a supporting role to express freedom and new emotions.

After learning how to write lettering from seanwes.com, I chose some typefaces as my reference and recreated my own style letters on paper. Several sketches were created to test different layouts and styles of the sentences from my script. Then I started to draw with pencil to see if the overall feeling is right. After making the decision, the final layout would be redrawn again by using Micron ink pen. The final stage was scanning them to Adobe Illustrator and doing final adjustments. (Fig. 11–15)

Process

Reference Typefaces

Macarons Light

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Macarons

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Macarons Sketch

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Frosted

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Heroe

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Alek

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Process

The Process of Creating Hand Lettering

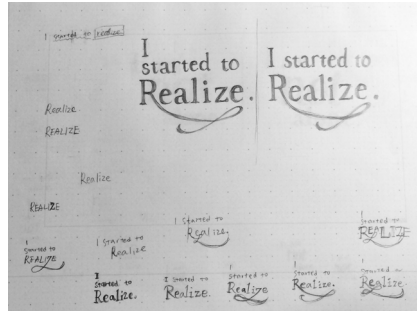


Figure 11: Pencil sketches of lettering

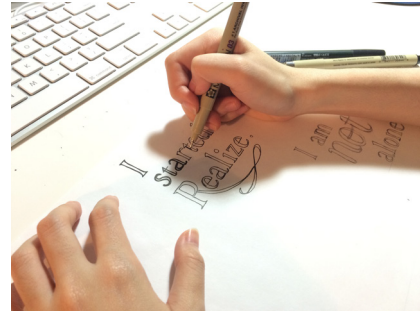


Figure 12: Re-create by using Micron Pen



Figure 13: Finished lettering

I
started to
Realize.

Figure 14: Imported to Adobe Illustrator to refine to vector file

with
with

Figure 15: Before and after refining vector letters in Adobe Illustrator

Process

Transitions

Various techniques are applied to *nowhere*, including cel animation, 3D animations, and vector morphing. Different transitions use different methods. They have different pros and cons, so I would assess carefully about which way was suitable for each situation before making actual transition.

Cel Animation

By drawing frame by frame, the animation has more flexibility with transforming one object to another object and it will create organic feeling. However, it's hard to make adjustments once the transitions are created. In order to have more accurate and engaging transition, I studied different reference and made sketches before making the final transition. For example, I searched many ocean wave videos online as my drawing reference. (Fig. 16)

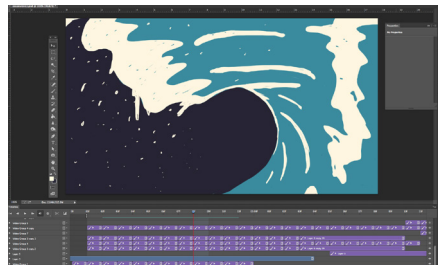


Figure 16: Creating Cel Animation in Adobe Photoshop

3D Animation

When dealing with perspective problems, 3D models or animations in Maya would help a lot. It's easy to have motion test, dynamic simulation and lighting tests in Maya. Nevertheless, it's harder to make merging objects and organic outline than Photoshop. Therefore, when I want to have more creative freedom in some scene, I would render 3D animation as a test and redraw again in Photoshop. (Fig. 17 – 20)

Process

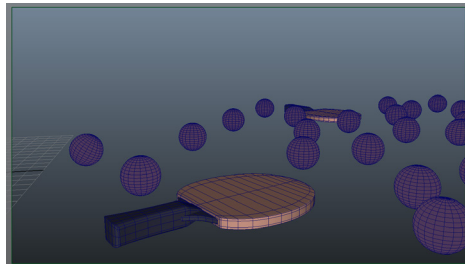


Figure 17: Maya Scene

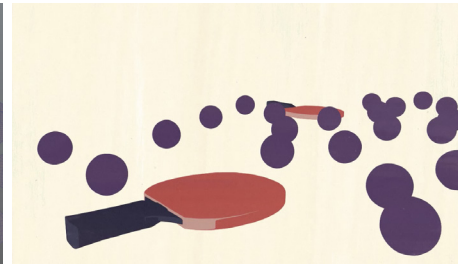


Figure 18: Rendered image



Figure 19: 3D Motion Test and bird draft in Photoshop



Figure 20: Final looking

Vector Morphing Animation

Creating vector morphing is easier than making frame by frame animation. This technique was used when there were some objects in the project that didn't have complicated secondary animation. When having special needs such as making an iris, using preset effects in After Effect is better. However, it's hard to have some liquid animation by simply adjusting those anchor points in the software. (Fig. 21 – 23)

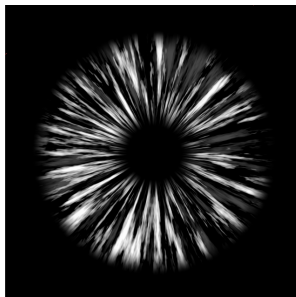


Figure 21: Iris making in After Effects

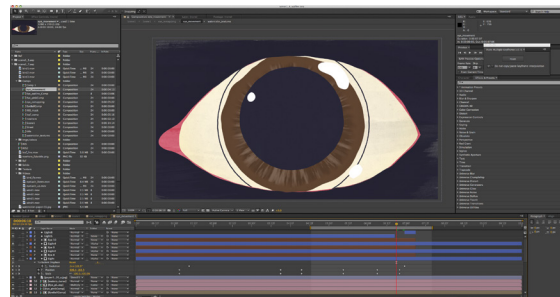


Figure 22: Eye making and animation in After Effects

Process

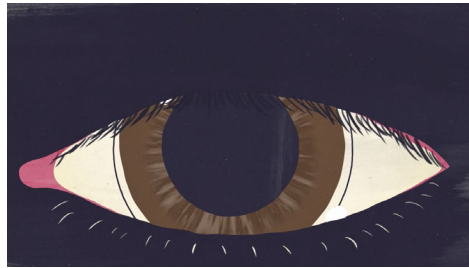


Figure 23: Adding eyelash animation from Photoshop for final result

Compositing

After rendering out the animations from Photoshop and Maya, main animations and lights were rendered separately and the details were refined in After Effects. In the compositing stage, all the elements were imported to add effects and make minor adjustments. Several brush-like background and animated textures were applied to stylize the visual elements with different color corrections. For the final look, “Turbulent displace” has been applied to create a hand-drawn style for the elements and letters from Maya and Illustrator. In addition, adding gradient color to emphasize the subjects and noise to avoid banding effect. (Fig. 24)

Audio Editing and Final Adjustments

Music plays a significant role in *nowhere* since there is no narration. It should connect the viewer’s emotional feeling to experience the journey from nowhere to “NOWhere.” The music is composed by Shu-Huan Yao, who was responsive to create the best result for the project regarding my committee members’ and friends’ feedback. Some additional sound effects were added to the piece to make the viewer have more emotional engagement to it. After the music was done, I did the final timing adjustment in Premiere in order to fit the rhythm of the music.

Process



Figure 24: Final screenshot of *nowhere*

Summary

This project has received a lot of positive feedback. Many people, including committee members, classmates, professional designers, artists, creative directors, professors, and people who are not in design fields have reviewed this thesis project from production stage to the finished work. They were impressed with the unique way of storytelling, the color arrangement, the unexpected transitions, and the hidden metaphors in *nowhere*. People who had similar or some unhappy experiences created strong emotional engagement with this project and they were grateful to me for sharing it in an artistic way.

Some people didn't discover the piano keyboard that I hid in the first and last scenes. Some were even confused about the meaning of the table tennis ball and jellyfish. After my explanation, they liked the use of the metaphors of them and felt that the meanings were adding remarkable input to this piece.

They also recommended some changes to me which improved this project better. For instance, some of the typeface choices could be improved and it would be better to have the evolution of the types that followed the storyline. The readability of some words was not clear. They also pointed out some small flaws in parts of the transitions.

After refining from the critiques I received above, the flow of the whole animation has been smoother with less distraction. I am grateful to learn so many things from this thesis project and receive a lot of positive feedback. The most important thing is that I am able to share my experience by combining what I've learned and influence my audience through various ways.

The finished project will be submitted to different film festivals and competitions such as Adobe Design Achievement Awards, vimeo awards, SIGGRAPH, and Los Angeles Movie Awards to spread the idea of positive thinking to more people. In addition, I could get more feedback from more professionals about what I could do better for my future projects from the different festivals and the awards.

Conclusion

The pursuit of happiness can either be challenging or simple. People control their own lives and therefore it all depends on what they think. There are numerous resources that discussing how to be happy. In terms of motion graphics, the lack of research about happiness except in the TV commercials that were promoting products intrigued me to start working on the thesis project. In *nowhere* project, I conveyed my idea by using kinetic typography to make everything as clear as possible, but presenting it as an abstract and artistic way. It has become a unique and uncommon approach of kinetic typography work.

Developing *nowhere* not only created great technical challenges for me, but also I challenged myself to face my past and the process of restoring my happiness. I have learned a lot by challenging myself to solve all the problems and expressed my thoughts as genuine as possible in *nowhere*. In addition, since this is my first time to create a large scale of motion graphics by myself, it's very important for me to strengthen my problem solving, time management, and planning skills. This project has created a significant value to me, and hopefully it could be as important to the viewer.

I would like to thank my thesis advisors Daniel DeLuna, David Halbstein, and Shaun Foster for their advices and support to complete this project. I would like to thank my family for supporting me all the time. I would like to thank my composor Shu-Huan Yao for the wonderful music. I would like to thank Chien-Ju Peng and Ted Chen for their assistance in my thesis project. I would also like to thank my friends for their motivation. I appreciate you all for transforming my project from nowhere to NOWhere.

Appendix: Thesis Proposal

Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts Degree

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
School of Design
MFA Visual Communication Design

Title: Halcyon
Submitted by: I-Cheng Lee
Date: October 16, 2013

Thesis Committee Approval:

Chief Thesis Adviser: Dan DeLuna, Visual Communication Design

Signature of Chief Thesis Adviser Date

Associate Thesis Adviser: David Halbstein, Visual Communication Design

Signature of Associate Thesis Adviser Date

Associate Thesis Adviser: Shaun Foster, Visual Communication Design

Signature of Associate Thesis Adviser Date

MFA Thesis Candidate: I-Cheng Lee

Signature of MFA Thesis Candidate Date

Appendix: Thesis Proposal

1

Abstract

The Pursuit of Happiness is an idea that has been discussed countless times. There are different myths and miscommunication of being happy. This motion graphic project will express the concept of being happy through positive thoughts and ideas instead of perusing material objects and possessions. People can control their own lives and happiness by changing their perspectives.

Situation Analysis

Keywords: The Pursuit of Happiness, Motion Graphics, Being Happy

"The Constitution only guarantees the American People the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself." – Benjamin Franklin

Today, if you can afford a smart phone without worrying about your next meal, you are lucky enough to live in a wealthy country. In the United States, there are a lot of resources. People have the right to speak, vote, and pursue happiness. Many commercials tell people that the key to become happy is to buy their products. Many people think becoming happy is as basic as buying good things, getting rich, or famous. They believe they don't have to think about it. However, materialism does not equal happiness. Surprisingly, most Americans can obtain what they need, but according to the surveys funded by the National Science Foundation, depression has been diagnosed on 11% of Americans when they reach 18 years old. Also, even though people in this wealthy country, the U.S. was ranked the 23rd happiest country out of 50 countries according to the 2012 World Happiness Report.¹ Are you happy? What are the true reasons of pursuing happiness? Can earning a lot of money or becoming famous make you happy?

For this project, I plan to develop a motion graphic piece about a journey of being happy and introduce positive thinking to pursue happiness from thoughts instead of

1. Jeffery Kluger, "The Happiness of Pursuit," *TIME Magazine*, July 15, 2013, 27.

Appendix: Thesis Proposal

2

material objects. Also, I will use my personal experience to reflect the universal truth that individuals have the control of their lives and thoughts.

Problem Statement

Will a motion graphic piece about being happy intrigues to the audience and also conveys the better idea of it?

Positive psychology, a term about researching how to be happy, has often been discussed today when people don't need to worry about their basic needs. Being happy is a topic that people usually ignore because they might have received biased ideas from their parents, friends, and social media. However, one-tenth of people have experienced depression before they are 18 years old. Therefore, there are plenty of books, documentaries, and videos to how to be happy. However, many motion graphic works about the pursuit of happiness are about selling products. The companies created an illusion for people that they can be happy by buying their products. For example, the Coca Cola Company advertised their product as "Open Happiness" when you drink it, and they make the viewers believe that they spread happiness by sharing their products to the less fortunate. They convey misleading messages to their audience and let them tend to pursue extrinsic goals of happiness such as money, image, and popularity instead of intrinsic ones, including personal growth, relationships, and desire to help.²

Therefore, I am going to create a motion graphic piece to convey the ideas of being happy by using intriguing visuals to tell how people's mind can function positively and change their world by using my own personal story. Marcus Aurelius claims "Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking."³

2. *Happy*, Wildscreen, directed by Roto Belic(2011; Wadi Rum Films, Inc., 2012), DVD

3. Will Bowen, *Happy This Year! The Secret to Getting Happy Once and for All* (Grand Haven: Brilliance Publishing), 29

Appendix: Thesis Proposal

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Different thoughts will create different results. I plan to share my journey about how I became a happy person and spread my positive energy to my audience. I will also build an emotional piece by combining kinetic-typography and visual graphics.

Survey of Literature

I divided the Survey of Literature into two sections, including the resources about the topic and the design and technical aspects. In the topic section, I chose books and speeches about how to be happy from different perspectives. The resources inspired me to come up with the idea about being happy and also helped me clarify my thoughts. In the design and technical aspects section, I chose the books that related to color design, motion graphics, and pre-production.

About the topic: Happiness

1. Happy This Year!: The Secret to Getting Happy Once and for All
Will Bowen, *Happy This Year! The Secret to Getting Happy Once and for All* (Grand Haven: Brilliance Publishing)

At the beginning of this book, Mr. Bowen writes that money can't buy people happiness. Next, he states different stages to make the reader happy by using a lot of his own or friends' examples, including thoughts, words, actions, habits, character, and destiny of happiness. He also provides a series of exercises for the reader to practice meditation and think positively. This book made me rethink myself and redefine the definition of happiness. As a result, it inspired me to develop this project.

2. The Happiness of Pursuit
Jeffery Kluger, "The Happiness of Pursuit," *TIME Magazine*, July 15, 2013, 24–37.

Free to be Happy
Jon Meacham, "Free to be Happy," *TIME Magazine*, July 15, 2013, 18–45.

Appendix: Thesis Proposal

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The articles analyze happiness from different aspects such as the history, biology, relationship between work and money, and the society. The articles also provide a number of statistics about happiness, including questions like if people are optimistic, what kinds of reasons to be happy, and if social media make people happier. They are great resources for me to know boarder details about the happiness status in the United States and proof my theories are right.

3. Happy documentary

Happy, wildscreen, directed by Roko Belic(2011; Wadi Rum Films, Inc., 2012), DVD

The documentary takes the viewer on a journey from Louisiana to Kolkata to find out what makes people happy by interviewing with different people. It's a movie to make the viewer think about if the extrinsic goals of happiness, including money, image, popularity, make people happier compares to the intrinsic goals, including personal growth, relationships, and a desire to help.

4. This is Water

Matthew Freidell, "This is Water," YouTube video, 9:23, posted by "GustabboLeon," August 21, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaVrn1Sz0H8/>.

This short film took an excerpt from one of David Foster Wallace's speech from the 2005 Graduating class of Kenyon College. It talks about people's choices in their daily life. In real life, there are thousands of daily routine and frustrating things that happen everyday, but it's hard to notice and no one will discuss about them. In order to experience real freedom, it's to choose how you view the situations; it can be either positive or negative. The goal of education is to teach students how they can make positive choices in their lives. It's a very great speech to learn about what the meaning of life is and change my perspective on everything.

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5. Matthieu Ricard: The habits of happiness

Matthieu Ricard, "Matthieu Ricard: The habits of happiness," *TedTalks* video, 20:58, November 2007.

http://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_on_the_habits_of_happiness.html/.

In this talk, Ricard talks that although happiness is the secondary element in our lives, if happiness decides the quality of them, we should understand it and clarify it. Happiness and pleasure is one of the common confusions. However, pleasure will change its nature; happiness won't. He explains ways about how could we reach happiness from our mind.

6. Stumbling on Happiness

Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness* (New York: Vintage Books)

This book describes happiness from scientific and psychological perspectives to explain how our brains work to be able to imagine future and how we will react when we accomplish our goals. This book makes me understand more about how I was created from internal to think and explain happiness.

Motion Graphics Design & Technical Aspects

1. Design Essentials for the Motion Media Artist: A Practical Guide to Principles & Techniques

Angie Taylor, *Design Essentials for the Motion Media Artist: A Practical Guide to Principles & Techniques* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier Inc.)

The book talks about the process of how to make a motion graphic and teaches many techniques for the motion design. Also, there are many contents from animation principles and typography to guide the reader how to apply them into motion graphic. Besides software teaching, it helps me build my fundamental concepts of applying visual and animations principles in my motion design and to make it more attractive.

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2. The Animator's Survival Kit: A Manual of Methods, Principles, and Formulas for Classical, Computer, Games, Stop Motion, and Internet Animators
Richard Williams, *The Animator's Survival Kit: A Manual of Methods, Principles, and Formulas for Classical, Computer, Games, Stop Motion, and Internet Animators* (London: Faber and Faber.)

This book has a lot of references about animation movements, including walking cycle, hands, and acting. It's great for me to study the movements and how to apply them to the project properly such as humans' and animals' movements that appears in the project.

3. Color Design Workbook: A Real-World Guild to Using Color in Graphic Design
Terry Lee Stone, Adams Morioka, Sean Adams, et al., *Color Design Workbook: A Real-World Guild to Using Color in Graphic Design* (MA: Rockport Publisher)

Color is very important for artwork because every color has meaning behind it and it creates different feeling to people. This book provides the reasons about color choosing and how to apply color in very creative and effective way. It's a guild book for me to learn how to consider color an important element and to build the atmosphere for this project by deciding the color palette.

4. Prepare to board! Creating Story and Characters for Animated Features and Shorts
Nancy Beiman, *Prepare to board! Creating Story and Characters for Animated Features and Shorts* (Burlington, MA: Taylor & Francis)

This book is about a lot of pre-production work such as the development of a story and character design. Explained how storyboard works and the difference from live action boards. The method and techniques such as camera angles, storytelling skills, and composition in an animation are discussed. This is helpful for me to build my storyline and storyboard for the project.

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5. Rob Legato: The art of creating awe

Robert Legato, "Rob Legato: The art of creating awe," *TedTalks* video, 16:27, August 2012.
http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_legato_the_art_of_creating_awe.html.

In this video he uses three different famous examples to talk about how the art he was making connects to the viewer's experience. This talk helps me to find a balance between my own experience and the viewer's thought. Also integrate the result into my story and design approaches in my project.

Project Description

Format: A Motion Graphic piece

Target Audience: People between the ages 15–35

Estimated Length: 2:00 – 2:30

Anticipated software: After Effects, Maya, Photoshop, and Illustrator

Design Concept

People often asked me, which is "Why are you always so happy?" Upon reflection, I decided to determine where happiness comes from. After I read the book "Happy This Year!" written by Will Bowen, I discovered myself more, and recognized the evidence about why people become happy and steps to achieve happiness. One step Bowen's book discusses is helping others, which is one element to obtain happiness. Therefore, I plan to use my personal journey of being happy to introduce a universal truth about how people can achieve happiness by loving who they are, thinking positively, and reflecting on their own stories. I will apply beautiful visuals in my project to engage my audience.

This project will be presented by merging typography and visual together. Stylized 2D and 3D visual symbols will be used to create a connection to the story. Different color palettes will be applied to follow the emotions of the story. Warm and bright color schemes will be used in happier scenes, and cold colors will describe dark times in the story.

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Story Script

I don't know where to start.
My whole life went wrong.
I should have been a boy.
I was laughed at and made fun of for who I was.
I didn't belong anywhere.
Wanting to change and be happy like others.

I failed.

Empty.
Hopelessness.
What was I supposed to do?

I stopped, Listened, And saw.

The light was always there,
I just had to turn it on.
The darkness was gone.

I learned to smile.
To be satisfied.
To think differently.

I started to be happy.
I am me.

"Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking." –
Marcus Aurelius
Be yourself and love who you are.

Style Frame



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Storyboard



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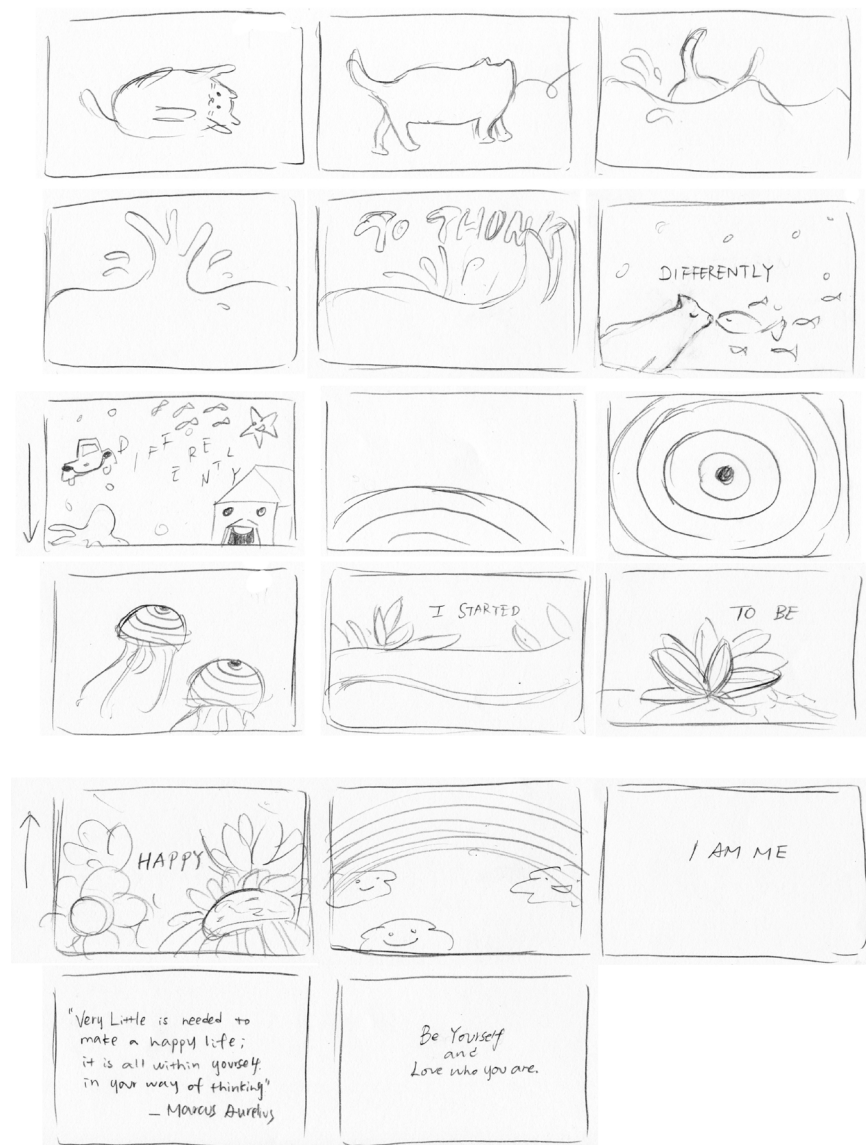
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Implementation Strategies

In order to accomplish the project, I will learn problem-solving skill to solve design and technical problems such as interpreting words to visuals and software issues. I will also learn a better workflow like managing my time well and following a design process in the industry to finish my project. I will broaden my technical capabilities and find efficient methods to achieve my goal of this project within the timeframe.

In terms of visual style and design for this project, I plan to create 2D flat looking style and play the possibilities between figure and ground to create intriguing visuals. I will also apply different colors to help create the emotions of the story. 3D and 2D elements will be applied in the project and create seamless motions between each other. Kinetic-typography will be integrated into the scene to help telling the whole story.

Dissemination

The completed project will be put on different websites that are related to computer graphic design such as the showcase on RIT, Behance Network, vimeo, Motionographer, and so on. I will give my business cards and thesis postcard to people and show them my project when I attend any computer graphic design related conferences or events. In addition, the project will be submitted to several competitions such as Adobe Design Achievement Awards, vimeo award, and SIGGRAPH to be watched by more people and professionals.

4. Robert Legato, "Rob Legato: The art of creating awe," *TedTalks* video, 16:27, August 2012.

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Evaluation Plan

According to Robert Legato, making art is not to create what the viewer sees.⁴ It is to make what they remember. I would like to use my project as a trigger to make my audience link their personal story and emotions, and then to think deeper about the meaning of happiness and reflect on their lives. Therefore, I plan to create a questionnaire to ask and interview several people in different areas about what they think of when they hear different words and see various visuals in the story, and their experience and emotions of the color choices. The feedback from them will make the project more engaging and will connect to the viewer to make better design approaches

Pragmatic Considerations

\$ 100 Research and Communication Expenses (Buying books, consulting with professionals)

\$ 350 Music/ Narration Recording and compose

\$ 50 Documentation Printing Costs

\$ 100 Promoting Costs (Business cards, postcards, DVDs)

\$ 600 Total Expenses

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Timeline

Planned Timeline	
2013	
September	Concept development and Storyboard Survey of Literature Thesis Proposal Draft
October	Storyboard and Style Frame Thesis Propose
November	Storyboard Revised Color Storyboard
December	Color Storyboard Modeling Rough Music
2014	
January	Animatic Started Animating 20 Completed
February	Animating 50% Completed
March	Animating 80% Completed
April	Animation Completed Compositing and Music Recording
May	Compositing Completed Thesis Defense
June	Final Work Revised
July – August	Promotion Documentation
September	Documentation

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